

Flux Archive 016 — The Infinite Possibilities of Photography

What's poppin', people? It's Dante.

Welcome to Flux Archive Session Number 16, where we look at some of the photographs that I've made along my black-and-white photography journey.

Today we're looking at photographs made from January 2024 to February 2024. We're looking at around two months of photography throughout this particular zine.

The first spread is a photograph I made along the Benjamin Franklin Bridge returning to Philadelphia. We have this landscape entryway shot into the zine, looking at the buildings in the background and the skyline of Philadelphia.

Exploring the Unknown

One of the special things about the high-contrast workflow is the way that light renders.

The inner curiosity I have about this practice is simply the fact that when I make a photograph of something, I'm curious about what life will look like photographed.

I'm curious about the way that light will render upon my camera sensor and create an image.

One of the special things that occurs is this sort of vignette effect where the shadows are crushed and the highlights are exposed.

These effects and this way of making an image are things that I can't really control, and I love the surprise that arises in the frames that I make through the high-contrast workflow.

Through this medium, I'm exploring the unknown.

I'm exploring what it looks like to photograph life with this sort of approach.

I'm not necessarily looking to describe life as fact, but what it could be through the abstraction that high-contrast black-and-white photography provides me.

Whether I'm photographing the gesture or photographing the texture, I'm simply curious about what life will look like photographed.

What will reality manifest to be in a photograph?

Light Is the Photographer's Superpower

Whether I'm looking at the natural reflected light in the early morning and the skyscrapers up above, or underground in the tunnels of the subways looking at artificial light, I'm always observing how light transforms the world.

Here we have two photographs of two different sources of light: natural reflected light coming off a building on the left-hand side and an artificial single spotlight on the right.

I find light ultimately to be the superpower for the photographer.

The way that light interacts with surfaces and interacts with your camera can provide a surprise.

When photographing a television screen or projector in the Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia, I held the exposure for over two seconds or so. I sat there and allowed all of the light to come from the TV screen, leaving us with this blank white screen.

Next to that is a moment I made of two twins that I found in the mall.

One thing about photography that I think is extremely important to highlight is that photography has more to do with your ability to engage with humanity and the spiritedness that you carry out there when you practice.

I had the audacity and courage to approach these people, ask for permission to make a photograph, and then, in between our conversation, a candid moment occurred naturally.

That's how you can get photographs with intimacy.

It's through engaging with people, being open about your practice, and then becoming a fly on the wall to capture these candid moments.

Photography as a Visual Diary

Here we have two family members, one of my great-aunts and my uncle, photographing through reflective surfaces in both frames.

There's also a photograph I made of the dashboard of a vehicle and a photograph through, I believe, a napkin stand in Reading Terminal. You can actually see my camera there in the photograph.

I'm treating photography as a visual diary, really just exploring myself through the medium and my personal life.

I'm not necessarily dependent upon the content of the external world being interesting.

This kind of photography is dependent upon **my own inner curiosities**.

I'm photographing discarded objects. I'm photographing a blank list. I'm photographing these beautiful views that I enjoy in my everyday life along the Delaware.

When I come to this river and look out beyond the horizon, at the light and the water moving, this act of going to the same mundane space every day and photographing the same view reminds me of the infinite possibilities of photography.

You Cannot Make the Same Photograph Twice

You cannot make the same photograph twice.

The light is changing.

The world is moving.

People are out of our control.

There's this infinite unknown and this infinitely repeatable practice of making pictures.

Photography is essentially endless and infinite.

The external world is always changing, but you too, on the individual level, are always changing.

Every time you step onto the streets, you're a new person.

Things are new and fresh.

I find that the ultimate test is to walk the same mundane spaces for the rest of your life—or every single day for a year—but still find new ways to photograph things.

Whether it's getting extremely close and photographing a mannequin, crushing the shadows, exposing for the highlights, and using macro mode, or looking up at the grand architecture and sculpture upon the facade of City Hall and photographing a wider scene.

Photographing in a variety of ways allows me to return to photography daily.

Getting close.

Standing afar.

Looking at textures on the walls.

This approach to photography is liberating.

Photograph everything and find the infinite potential of photography itself to be what inspires you.

I'm not dependent on the world giving me anything.

Photographing With Intention

Here we have some photographs I made during the snowfall.

There are footprints going down the Art Museum steps, and then we have this single subject walking towards the skyline of Philadelphia along the boardwalk of the Schuylkill River banks.

I was standing upon the South Street Bridge.

I actually sought out to make this exact image because I knew it was snowing, and I knew that if I stood upon that bridge and looked out towards the skyline, I would see the beautiful pattern of white snow cast upon the boardwalk.

I went out with intention to make this photograph of the snow on this particular day.

Exposing Intuitively

Here we have this beautiful photograph I made of a woman smoking.

The effect that I achieved with the reflecting light is actually coming from a mirror. There's a mirror discarded in the garbage.

What I do with my camera is half-press and expose for the subject on the right-hand side, move my camera back to the full scene, and click the shutter.

What that does is overexpose the mirror.

Otherwise, when I'm photographing, the camera is going to take that reflected light into consideration and crush the other area into the shadows.

I work with fully automatic settings using AV mode and program mode, so the way that I expose becomes very intuitive.

I can either increase the exposure compensation or do that small trick where I half-press in the part of the scene that's in the shadow area.

Bring the Camera Along for the Ride

Here we have fog emerging along the Schuylkill River while I'm simply going for my morning walk.

I'm not going out there to photograph.

I'm simply living my everyday life, **bringing the camera along for the ride.**

When I arrived at the top of the pavilion where I typically go, I ran into some tourists from Turkey. I remember talking and photographing. They saw my camera and were asking questions, and I continued photographing the lampposts, architecture, and fog on this beautiful day.

I'm using photography almost as a way for me to preserve and archive my city.

If you look at the construction outside of the tunnel of City Hall, everything is changing.

Everything is fleeting.

Preserving Space and Time

I think one of the most powerful ways to simply think about photography is that you're documenting space and time as it changes.

By making a photograph today, 10 years from now, 100 years from now, these photographs can become impactful simply because you're preserving space and time.

You're preserving what it looks like today, in this year.

Here we have another photograph I made of City Hall.

One of the challenges that I like to give myself is returning to the same scene, returning to that same tower of City Hall, but finding new ways to make a photograph of that same tower.

That's a really fun exercise that I give myself to challenge myself creatively.

I know there's potential for a photograph of pigeons here all the time. They're always there flying around.

I tried positioning myself in a new way by photographing the tower through the bus stop and allowing the texture of the bus stop and the flying birds to give me that surprise.

Relinquishing Control

There's a self-portrait I made with shadows cast from a fence upon my face in relationship to shadow play occurring as a man gives some change to somebody on the street.

These kinds of moments you can't really put together intentionally.

With the Flux system, these photographs are paired without intention.

They're simply chronologically sequenced.

Sometimes I find the power of relinquishing control of sequencing to be surprising.

The interplay between the shadows in each of these frames intrigues me.

Isolating Subjects From Chaos

Here we have some frames that I made during the Chinese New Year celebration in Philadelphia.

It was a very active day.

However, because there's so much chaos, it becomes difficult to organize a frame.

One of the things that I do when photographing is try to isolate a subject extremely closely.

Typically, I'm shooting in Snap Focus mode. But if I have a subject extremely close, I click the Fn button and alternate from Snap Focus to Single Point Focus.

I simply go to Single Point Focus, move my camera toward the subject, lock in my focus, and click the shutter.

That's a simple technique that I use to photograph quickly and instinctively when something is extremely close to me.

I'm moving from Snap Focus to Single Point Focus and isolating subjects from the chaos of the streets.

Finding Abstraction Everywhere

Speaking of environments, I'm oftentimes in nature.

Here we have a photograph of a dead beehive in relationship to a flag raising outside of City Hall.

I have this inner biophilia, this sort of love for all natural things, whether plants or people.

I hope that reflects through my photography.

There are photographs of birds in flight and sunlight, and a photograph of a gesture of hands against the shadow area.

Then there are these Jewish men dancing during the Shabbat celebration on Friday.

Instead of only photographing the obvious moment of the dancing, I looked down at the puddle beneath their feet and used that to make something with more intrigue.

Using the reflective surface of the puddle, I made a more abstract image of the shadows, silhouettes, and forms of the men celebrating, with the gesture of him holding up the Torah, dancing and jumping.

You can see the feet.

And finally, we have that skull on top of a bike's tire.

The Flux System

Every Flux Issue has a contact sheet in the back with the manifest document and a QR code to access the work online.

All of the work is open source, downloadable, and free.

You can also make your own Flux Issue.

At the top of the description, you'll find the Flux Issue Generator. Upload 36 pictures. You can submit them directly to me or print out your own work yourself at home.

If I enjoy the work, I'll review it here on this YouTube channel.

Otherwise, if you'd like to join the Flux Community Discord server, just click the Join button on the YouTube channel and you'll find a link to access that community.

With that being said, thank you for watching.

I'll see you soon.

Peace.